



English Schools' Football Association

# Membership Matters

## Chairman's Statement

Dear Schools' Football Colleagues,

I hope that you and your families have been staying safe and keeping well - health and well-being are precious above all else. Even those of us whose memories stretch back further than we care to admit have never experienced the disruption to our daily routine imposed to reduce the threat from Coronavirus. The country seems to be easing its way out of lockdown, but colleagues in schools have very demanding jobs as they welcome back more students and plan for the many challenges that September will bring. The 2020-21 school year will undoubtedly be an extremely intensive one. I am struck by the absolute need at the moment to make sure that we all continue to be kind to one another and to value and promote those aspects of daily life that are going to help see us through this crisis.

Many of you will have heard that we sadly and unexpectedly lost one of our Council colleagues, Paul Rickard, on 18th May. Paul joined Council in 1993 and, as well as giving great service to the ESFA, was also a stalwart of Worcestershire CSFA. Of necessity, his funeral was a private family affair, but many of us were able to watch it streamed live from Redditch. Dave Woollaston and Stuart Inger have written a wonderful and moving tribute to Paul, which is on the ESFA website (<https://schoolsfootball.org/about-us/council/in-memoriam/>); they, together with our Vice-Chairman, Mark Hignett, travelled to Redditch to be part of the tribute to Paul by applauding him on his final journey. Our thoughts are very much with Paul's widow, Ann, and their children Matthew and Emma at this sad time. In due course, there will hopefully be an opportunity for the ESFA family to be part of a wider tribute.

For the past four months, the ESFA staff have demonstrated their usual commitment, loyalty and professionalism. How fortunate we are to have such a great team, so well-led by Andrea Chilton. We wish our outgoing intern, Jacob Blades, the very best of luck with his final year of undergraduate study – he's done an outstanding job with our social media presence and has displayed a very good work ethic in his time with us. Darren Alcock, Andy Weston and Sarah Kearney return from furlough on 1st July, with Ian Laithwaite returning from leave at the same time. They re-join Andrea, Dawn Howard and Kieren Laverick, with the other staff remaining under furlough for the time being. Most of ESFA Council have been involved in either the Trustees or COBRA groups, where the regular discussions have been positive and purposeful. The Association Restructure Group has also been meeting on-line as required.



(Continued)



## Chairman's Statement (continued )

You may be aware that the FA is having to make significant cuts to its budget, and we have recently been informed how these will affect the ESFA. The Trustees have been deliberating how these will impact on the ESFA finances and how we can best plan for the future. The indicative FA funding for season 2020-21 represents a significant cut for the ESFA, at 31% overall, to approximately £400k. In cash terms, our funding cut until the end of this calendar year has been set by the FA at 14.5%, in line with the cuts in CFA core funding, but thereafter, it is proposed to cut the ESFA's funding to 50%. Before the 50% cut takes effect, the FA will conduct a "review of education partners" and the "return on {FA} investment" we provide. We are assured that we will be fully involved in the review, including its scoping, but await further details of this review, which is due to begin in July or August. We are in discussion with senior FA personnel about these matters and Mike Spinks, our representative on the FA Council, and I have a meeting scheduled imminently with the FA Chairman. In the meantime, we continue to work on scenarios to secure the financial future of the Association. This has included a further one-month commitment to the underwriting of the cost of CSFA administrators, up until the end of August. Those who are affected will be contacted directly this week.

The financial viability of the ESFA is now more dependent than ever on the successful implementation of the Player Passport Scheme. Having first suggested this two years ago as a possible means of securing our financial future, and with Council and the 2018 AGM having supported it, I am personally committed to making it work. Meeting every County SFA over the next few months will be a personal priority, and Andrea and I have been discussing plans for a "roadshow" to take place as soon as it is feasible. Although time- and travel-intensive, we know that personal contact is appreciated by Membership and that this strategy has the potential to work effectively across the country. We will also use these meetings to support those counties that have yet to complete the restructuring plans to do so.

As things stand, the affiliation of districts and counties to the ESFA is being carried over, with insurance cover remaining in place, until such time as we open fresh affiliation for season 2020-21. Note, however, that insurance is only valid for activities that are being undertaken in strict compliance with existing COVID-19 guidance and advice as issued by the FA on 12th June: <http://www.thefa.com/news/2020/jun/12/grassroots-covid-19-update-120620>

Schools have been informed of a delayed entry to National Competitions and Darren is making plans to send out the entry documentation in September for a possible start at the beginning of Term 2. The Competitions Committee will need to consider how the inter-district and inter-county competitions might operate next season, bearing in mind that a "COVID-secure" environment for these might involve different considerations than for schools.

As the proverb goes "A smooth sea never made a skilful mariner". Despite everything that is going on, I remain optimistic. That is not to underplay the tremendous difficulties that many are facing, and the worries that this pandemic brings. Rather, I am choosing to think what these times will teach us, and to think of better days ahead. And they will come.

With best wishes

Phil Harding

ESFA Chairman [philksfa@gmail.com](mailto:philksfa@gmail.com)



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